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THE COMMUNICATOR

The USAID GH Newsletter for CAs

Volume 3 Number 2

July 2004

The Communicator's Goals:

- * To increase the flow of information between USAID's Bureau for Global Health and CAs engaged in communications and public relations work
- * To enhance awareness of the need to disseminate news about our work and to show why it is important

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If you would like back issues of The Communicator, e-mail
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RECOGNIZING INTERNATIONAL EVENT DAYS

Recognizing international days of commemoration (such as International Day for Refugees and International Day for Youth) presents a good opportunity to show support for the efforts to combat these social problems as well as highlight our organizations' historic and current achievements in these areas. Over the past few months, USAID has been creating Web pages for such events with links to our own and our partners' information materials regarding the theme, including issue briefs, success stories, photos, and technical documents. We would also like to know what communication tools your organization has been using or plans to use to commemorate such events and days (recognition on Web sites, newsletters, etc.)

Upcoming events are:

1. International Youth Day, August 15th
2. Population Awareness Week, starts October 16th
3. International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, November 15th

Check out our sites at:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/news/refugee_day04.html

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/news/envIRON_day.html

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TARGETING YOUR AUDIENCE THROUGH NEWSWIRES

Traditionally, PR practitioners go to newswires to reach mass audiences fast and efficiently. The recent boom in smaller wire services allows for the targeting of more specific audiences as well. This is partly due to increasing Web access as well as the emergence of traditional minority groups as majorities in some major cities. Newswire entrepreneurs say that they started their services to reach specific ethnic or demographic audiences that were not targeted fully by mainstream newswires. For instance, Valarie Steiner, the acting communication director at UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research, and Corin Ramos, president of Access media, started hitting Asian grocery stores, consulate offices, and ethnic chambers of commerce to find Asian-language publications. Both say that Asian Americans are especially hard to reach since they originate from different cultures and speak a number of different languages. Ramos came up with her own Asian-American media list, which is available to clients. Miami is another hub for ethnic newswires, such as the four-year-old Hispanic PR Wire and the three-year-old Black PR Wire. Both wires keep lists of politicians, clergy, and various opinion leaders, as well as media lists. However, niche media can be difficult to reach through traditional wire-distribution mechanisms and AP costs are often too steep. Some companies, such as the public policy/nonprofit US Newswire, submit all news releases by wire and supplement them with e-mails and faxes to reach specialized audiences. While wires reach larger audiences, e-mails and faxes can reach individual journalists directly. Many PR practitioners agree that niche or smaller wire services are a fabulous supplement to mainstream wire distribution.

Here are some tips:

DO consider using niche newswires when your message aims at specific audiences

DO expect strong pick-up rates for press releases targeting niche media with limited resources

DO compare services and quality before choosing a wire or news service to reach your niche audience

DON'T assume that a news release circulated through AP will reach ethnic and other niche audiences

DON'T assume that wire personnel will make follow-up calls to journalists -- do that yourself

DON'T limit your distribution target -- other audiences might be interested as well

[SOURCE: PR Week; February 9, 2004; pg. 18]

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RESOURCES FOR YOU

Congressional Communications

Stephanie Vance, president of AdVanced Consulting (www.advocacyguru.com), has come up with a fantastic list of resources for effective communication with Congress. She divides them into three categories: (1) general information on incoming communications to Congress, (2) understanding the congressional context and how to approach members of Congress, and (3) online tools for sending e-mails and other communications to Congress. For instance, how do members of Congress and congressional staff filter out e-mails that need attention? To find out how members work and make decisions, go to http://congress.indiana.edu/learn_about/about.htm and http://congress.indiana.edu/congress_today/communicating.htm.

AdVance Consulting also conducted a survey of congressional staff on how to best communicate with congressional offices:
<http://www.advocacyguru.com/staffsurvey.htm>

[SOURCE: Advocacy Tipsheet, April 1, 2004; www.advocacyguru.com]

Personalize Your Newsletters

E-mail newsletters should be valuable and useful and strengthen your relationship with your readers. A good way to do this is to write content in a genuine and personal way, engaging your readers on a more personalized level. An editor, for instance, gives a newsletter an individual touch, especially if he or she writes a short introduction for the issue. This makes the reader feel as if the newsletter comes from an individual rather than an organization. If you have an introduction or greeting from your editor and give the content a personal style, you stand a better chance of building and retaining a long-term following.

[SOURCE: Excess Voice #057, June 2004; www.excessvoice.com]

Communication Strategies That Work

According to the last of a series by eCatalyst, IMPACS' monthly newsletter that has been writing about effective communication strategies for not-for-profit organizations, there are a number of steps involved in creating effective communication strategies:

- * First you have to look at your audience and ensure that you consider what motivates them.

- * Then you have to survey the messages your audience is already receiving via e-mail, phone calls, mails, and exposure to ads, billboards, TV, radio, and magazines. Remember that the number of messages people receive on a daily basis is staggering. It is important to look at which messages, or types of messages, are most effective at reaching the target audience.

- * Next, you must identify the "levers of opportunity," the types of opportunity that might enable your audience to make the desired decision or behavior change you're asking for.

* With this information you are ready for the creative process of strategy development, which depends on connecting the dots between all the sources and facts that you have acquired with your survey and assessment. You can work with your team and brainstorm to come up with a work plan, budget, and evaluation process.

[SOURCE: eCatalyst, IMPACS, April 2004, www.impacs.org]

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YOUR FEEDBACK

With your participation this newsletter can increase our interaction and participation in getting the word out about what we do. Let us know what you would like to see in this newsletter, what topics you want covered, or what additional items should be included. We also encourage you to become a contributor -- pass along stories about your program, including poignant accounts, major accomplishments, new publications, awards received, or upcoming conferences, to lchomiak@usaid.gov.

Also, if you know people who should get this newsletter, let us know so we can add them to our subscribers list.

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